

Here's the original statement.

If you hit a glass with a hammer, the glass will break.

You can come up with a few other statements that you think would also have to be true.

For example, you could say

If the glass is broken, it was hit with a hammer.

You would symbolize this as $B \rightarrow H$. That seems like a reasonable outcome, but can you say that it *must be true* given our original statement?

Not *necessarily*. The glass could have been thrown out the window, stepped on by a giraffe, shot up with a Red Rider BB gun, and so on. If this were an answer choice on an Inference question in which the argument contained our original statement, what would you do? Hopefully, you would eliminate it because it doesn't have to be true. You could also suppose that

If you don't hit a glass with a hammer, the glass won't break.

In this case, your symbolization would become $\neg H \rightarrow \neg B$. Once again this seems reasonable in many cases, but does it *have to be true*? Again, not necessarily. It could have been thrown out the window, run over by a car, shattered by an opera singer's high C note, and so on. If this were an answer choice on an Inference question in which the argument contained our original statement, what would you do? Hopefully, you would eliminate it too because just like the last one, it doesn't have to be true.

How about this statement.

If the glass isn't broken, it wasn't hit with a hammer.

This would be symbolized as $\neg B \rightarrow \neg H$. This *must* be true. It makes sense if you think about it because you know for sure that if you hit the glass with a hammer, you're definitely going to break the glass. So if you come across an unbroken glass, there's no way it could have been hit with a hammer, at least not if you accept the truth of the original statement the way we have to on the LSAT. The only way that you could argue the truth of the above statement is by arguing the truth of the original. And while you can do that in real life, you can't do it on the LSAT.

This statement, which must always be true given that the original statement is true, is known as the *contrapositive*.

To create the contrapositive of a statement, take the original statement (or its symbolization, which is easier to work with) and perform the following two steps: Flip the order of the statements and then negate each of them.

Here's how it works with our original.

$$H \rightarrow B$$

Flip the order of the statements and negate each of them to get the contrapositive.

$$\neg B \rightarrow \neg H$$

Now, what do you do if you have to negate something that's already negative? Let's take a look at an example.

If Pablo attends the dance, Christina won't attend the dance.

You can symbolize this as follows:

$$P \rightarrow \neg C$$

How do you negate $\neg C$? Well, two negatives make a positive. When you negate a statement like "Christina won't attend the dance," it becomes "Christina will attend the dance." The contrapositive of your original statement is

$$C \rightarrow \neg P$$

With these examples, which are tied to real life and make reasonable sense, it might seem as if it's more work to learn how to apply this process than it would be to just reason out what the only other true statement would be. And it would be pretty reasonable to do that if you understand the way conditionals and contrapositives work and if the original statement makes sense. If only the LSAT were always that straightforward.

Instead, what will often happen is the original statement will be some abstract and complicated notion that's hard to get a handle on. For instance, you might see a conditional statement such as "Copper will not be added to the alloy only if

aluminum is also not added to the alloy.” Not nearly as intuitive, is it? Add to that the pressure of taking a timed, standardized exam and you’ll wish you had memorized the simple symbols above.

These steps always work so it’s worth having them at your disposal. We’re telling you all this because sometimes arguments contain “if...then” statements like the ones above. Usually the LSAT writers then ask an Inference question that requires you to find the answer that *must be true*. A couple of the answer choices will seem like reasonable things to believe. Another one or two may be variations on the original conditional statement, but won’t be valid contrapositives.

It’s possible that the credited response may just actually be the contrapositive—that depends on how complicated the argument is and how many pieces of information the passage contains—but regardless, knowing how to derive the contrapositive will help you eliminate wrong choices. Having both the original and contrapositive statements makes it easier to see the difference between what is *definitely* true and what merely *could* be true.

Arguments Technique: Look for Little Things That Mean a Lot

Another key to cracking Inference questions is to pay close attention to detail. Inferences are often made around seemingly innocuous words or phrases. For instance, anytime you see a term of quantity, comparison, or frequency, odds are it contains an inference.

Statement: *Most people like Picasso.*

Inference: *Some people may not like Picasso.*

Statement: *Unlike her jacket, mine is real leather.*

Inference: *Her jacket is not real leather.*

Statement: *Russ almost never shows up on time.*

Inference: *Russ rarely (or occasionally) does show up on time.*

Keep an eye out for details, and you’ll stand a better chance of getting Inference questions right.



Summary: Inference Questions

With Inference questions, read the argument carefully and pay close attention to details such as qualifying language. Once you're at the answer choices, your goal is to eliminate the four answer choices that *don't have to be true* or are not *wholly supported* by evidence provided in the argument. You're also going to look out for relevance and, especially, issues of extreme language.

The way that Inference questions are phrased can be very tricky. See the "Sample Question Phrasings" column in the chart below for some examples.

Sample Question Phrasings	Act
<i>Which one of the following statements can be validly inferred from the information above?</i> <i>If the statements above are true, then which of the following must also be true?</i> <i>Which one of the following conclusions can be validly drawn from the passage above?*</i> <i>Which one of the following conclusions is best supported by the passage above?*</i>	• Read carefully, paying close attention to qualifying language, and then go to the answer choices. • Once there, eliminate any answer choices that are not <i>directly</i> supported by evidence in the passage. • Look for relevance and extreme language to eliminate answer choices. • Use the contrapositive if there are "if...then" statements contained in the passage and in the answer choices.

*Even though the stems in these questions contain the term "conclusions," they are not Main Point questions. Main Point questions ask you to find the conclusion, whereas Inference questions ask you for a conclusion, one of many that could possibly be derived from the passage. They are *Inference* questions, not *Main Point* questions. For contrast, review the sample Main Point question phrasings on page 28.



LESSON 8: REASONING QUESTIONS

So far, the questions you've seen in the Arguments section have been concerned with the literal contents: what's the conclusion, how do you attack or support it, or what does it assume? What piece of information will resolve two seemingly inconsistent pieces of information, or what else do you know to be true if the statements in the argument are true? Now you're going to look at some questions that deal with the arguments on a more abstract or descriptive level.

The first of these is the Reasoning question task, which asks you to determine not what the argument is about, but how the argument is made. This sounds quite straightforward, doesn't it? Well, sometimes it will be, but sometimes it will be rather difficult because of very attractive incorrect answers and deliberately impenetrable vocabulary. The answers to Reasoning questions will fall into one of two categories: general answers that don't actually mention the subject matter of the argument, and specific answers that do address the subject matter of the argument. Occasionally, the answer choices will be a mix of both.

So how do you approach questions such as these? Well, first you have to be able to identify the task. Then your goal is to describe what's happening in the argument—in other words, how the author arrived at his or her conclusion. Give one a try.

The Argument

12. An artificial hormone has recently been developed that increases milk production in cows. Its development has prompted some lawmakers to propose that milk labels should be required to provide information to consumers about what artificial substances were used in milk production. This proposal should not be implemented: just imagine trying to list every synthetic fertilizer used to grow the grass and grain the cows ate, or every fungicide used to keep the grain from spoiling!

The argument proceeds by

- (A) proposing an alternative course of action for achieving the objectives of the proposal being argued against 
- (B) raising considerations in order to show that the proposal being argued against, if strictly implemented, would lead to absurd consequences 
- (C) using specific examples in order to show that an alternative to the proposal being argued against would better achieve the ends to which the original proposal was directed 
- (D) introducing a case analogous to the one under consideration to show that a general implementation of the proposal being argued against would be impossible 
- (E) questioning the motivation of those who made the proposal being argued against 

Here's How to Crack It

Step 1: Assess the question You've read the question, but here it is again.

The argument proceeds by

This asks you to describe the author's method of reasoning. Read the argument and look at the purpose structure of the argument to see how he or she gets from the evidence to the main point.

Step 2: Analyze the argument Read the argument closely, paying attention to the author's reasoning. To do this, you'll have to identify the conclusion and the premises because this will allow you to understand the structure of the argument—in other words, how the author used the evidence to support his or her conclusion. You don't need to identify any gaps in the reasoning. Here it is again.

Analyze

Find the conclusion and premises on Reasoning questions.

An artificial hormone has recently been developed that increases milk production in cows. Its development has prompted some lawmakers to propose that milk labels should be required to provide information to consumers about what artificial substances were used in milk production. This proposal should not be implemented: just imagine trying to list every synthetic fertilizer used to grow the grass and grain the cows ate, or every fungicide used to keep the grain from spoiling!

What is the purpose of this argument? To disagree—you can tell because the argument presents a proposal and then the author does not want the proposal implemented.

- Author's conclusion: *This proposal (that milk labels should be required to list artificial substances used in milk production) should not be implemented.*
- Author's premises: *Such labels would have to list so many synthetic products as to be impossible to implement.*

Step 3: Act Your goal here is simply to describe how the author made his argument. In this case, the author disagrees with implementing a proposal by presenting reasons that make the proposal too difficult to implement.

The credited response to a Reasoning question will describe how the author constructed the argument.

Step 4: Answer using Process of Elimination Now you're going to approach the answer choices. The credited response will be a paraphrase of the author's reasoning: the proposal shouldn't be implemented because it will be unreasonable to do so. Check them out.

- ☐ A proposing an alternative course of action for achieving the objectives of the proposal being argued against 

The author doesn't propose an alternative course of action, so eliminate it.

- ☐ B raising considerations in order to show that the proposal being argued against, if strictly implemented, would lead to absurd consequences 

While the wording is different, it does line up with the disagree purpose structure and the author's position since he points out that there are too many ingredients in a reasonably list. Keep it.

- ☐ C using specific examples in order to show that an alternative to the proposal being argued against would better achieve the ends to which the original proposal was directed 

What alternative proposal? The author isn't trying to solve the problem, just point out that the current proposal shouldn't be implemented.

- ☐ D introducing a case analogous to the one under consideration to show that a general implementation of the proposal being argued against would be impossible 

Although the author implies that the proposal would be impossible, he does not offer an analogous case to the one described in the argument. Eliminate it.

- ☐ E questioning the motivation of those who made the proposal being argued against 

There is no mention of the motivation of those making the label proposal. Get rid of it.

That one was pretty straightforward. You were able to recognize the credited response pretty easily because you understood the author's reasoning and purpose structure before you approached the answer choices. Note how abstract the answers were. They didn't mention any of the specific details from the argument but took a much broader view.

**Hint:**

On Reasoning questions, try to match each piece of the answer choice to a piece of the argument.

Arguments Technique: Using Process of Elimination with Reasoning Questions

You may have noticed that when we discussed some of the answer choices, we took each word or phrase from the answer choice and asked, “Does this correspond to anything that actually occurred in the argument?” Most of the time, the answer to this question was no. The answer choices might sound abstract and technical, but unless you can go back to the argument and say, “Ah, yes, this is where the author gives the example and this is where he or she gives the counterexample,” then an answer choice that mentions “examples” and “counterexamples” will be wrong. This technique is the key to dealing with Reasoning questions; it should allow you to eliminate two or three answer choices every time. One other nice advantage of this technique is that it works even if you can’t articulate the author’s reasoning in your own words.

Look through the answers on Reasoning questions slowly and make sure to match each piece of the answer choice to a piece of the argument. When you come across something in an answer choice that doesn’t correspond to anything in the argument, get rid of that choice. If it’s even a little wrong, it’s all wrong.

Summary:

Reasoning Questions

In Reasoning questions, you should come up with your own description of how the argument unfolds. If you're able to come up with a terse, exact description of the argument, you can usually match it with one of the answer choices. Even if you can't come up with a good description, you can eliminate any answers that have elements that don't correspond with what actually happens in the author's argument. The vocabulary in the answer choices will probably be more esoteric than that which you used, but as long as the meaning is the same, you're fine.

Sample Question Phrasings	Act
<i>The argument proceeds by...</i> <i>Leah responds to Kevin by doing which of the following?</i> <i>The method the activist uses to object to the developer's argument is to...</i> <i>Dr. Jacobs does which of the following?</i> <i>Which one of the following most accurately describes the role played in the argument by the claim that...</i>	• Read the argument carefully and then describe what is happening in your own words, focusing on the purpose structure and the author's conclusion and premises. • Take this description and rigorously apply it to all the answer choices. • Once you're at the answer choices, use the technique of comparing the actions described in the answer choices against those that actually occur in the argument. • Eliminate anything that doesn't appear in the argument.



LESSON 9: FLAW QUESTIONS

Flaw questions are similar to Reasoning questions, but they're dissimilar enough that they call for a slightly different approach. On recent LSATs, Flaw questions have been far more common than have Reasoning questions. So what's the difference? Well, while a Reasoning question asks you to identify what the argument does or how it's argued, a Flaw question asks you what the argument does *wrong*. And as we mentioned before, if you find a problematic assumption in an argument, you've probably found its flaw. The approach to Flaw and Reasoning questions is the same, but with one important distinction: during Step 2, you should break down the argument into its parts and locate the assumption. After you've spotted the assumption, you just need to state what's wrong with the argument. Look at the following argument.

The Argument

13. According to some astronomers, Earth is struck by a meteorite large enough to cause an ice age on an average of once every 100 million years. The last such incident occurred nearly 100 million years ago, so we can expect that Earth will be struck by such a meteorite in the near future. This clearly warrants funding to determine whether there is a means to protect our planet from such meteorite strikes.

The reasoning in the argument is most subject to criticism on the grounds that the argument

- (A) makes a bold prescription on the basis of evidence that establishes only a high probability for a disastrous event 
- (B) presumes, without providing justification, that the probability of a chance event's occurring is not affected by whether the event has occurred during a period in which it would be expected to occur 
- (C) moves from evidence about the average frequency of an event to a specific prediction about when the next such event will occur 
- (D) fails to specify the likelihood that, if such a meteorite should strike Earth, the meteorite would indeed cause an ice age 
- (E) presumes, without providing justification, that some feasible means can be found to deter large meteorite strikes 

PrepTest 45, Section 4, Question 19

Here's How to Crack It

Step 1: Assess the question You've already read the question, but here it again.

The reasoning in the argument is most subject to criticism on the grounds that the argument

Now, you're expected to describe why the above argument is bad. Remember that this is different from "weakening" an argument, in which you'd hypothesize that the five answer choices were true. All you're looking for here is to describe the way in which the argument is bad, not add something that would make it worse.

Step 2: Analyze the argument Okay, so start by breaking it down into its parts.

- Author's conclusion: *This (likelihood of a large meteorite strike) clearly warrants funding to determine whether there is a means to protect our planet from such meteorite strikes.*
- Author's premises: *Earth is struck by a meteorite large enough to cause an ice age on an average of once every 100 million years. The last such incident occurred nearly 100 million years ago, so we can expect that Earth will be struck by such a meteorite in the near future.*
- Author's assumption: *How did the author get from an average time between meteor strikes to needing to prepare for an imminent meteor strike? He is interpreting the statistic incorrectly to assume that an average amount of time is an actual, predictable amount of time.*

Step 3: Act The correct answer to a Flaw question often draws attention to an assumption. If the assumption is that an average amount of time can be used to reliably predict the next meteorite strike, then the flaw is that the author fails to consider that the statistic might not be an accurate predictor. The credited response should draw attention to this weak link between the average and the prediction.

The credited response to a Flaw question will describe how the premises don't necessarily lead to the conclusion, often drawing attention to a key assumption.

Step 4: Answer using Process of Elimination Now you're going to attack the answer choices. Let's see if you can find an answer choice that has something to do with the author making an analogy.

- ☒ A makes a bold prescription on the basis of evidence that establishes only a high probability for a disastrous event 

This answer describes the progression of the argument, but this isn't what makes the argument's logic problematic. This describes the argument's conclusion and premises, but not the assumption, and the assumption is where the argument is flawed. Eliminate it.

- ☒ B presumes, without providing justification, that the probability of a chance event's occurring is not affected by whether the event has occurred during a period in which it would be expected to occur 

Does this match the assumption that average time can be a reliable predictor? Let's match this to the specific details in the argument. The probability of a chance event (meteorite strike) is not affected by whether the event (meteorite strike) has occurred during a period of time (100 million years) it was expected to. This is the opposite of what we are looking for. Get rid of it.

- ☒ C moves from evidence about the average frequency of an event to a specific prediction about when the next such event will occur 

Does this match the assumption that average time can be a reliable predictor? Well, it addresses the shift from average frequency (average time) to a specific prediction (the next meteorite strike), which lines up with the assumption. Keep this one for now.

- ☒ D fails to specify the likelihood that, if such a meteorite should strike Earth, the meteorite would indeed cause an ice age 

This answer doesn't match the assumption because the argument is centered on the asteroid strike itself, not the results of such a strike. Eliminate it.

- ☒ E presumes, without providing justification, that some feasible means can be found to deter large meteorite strikes 

Be careful here! You may think that the author believes this based on his conclusion that the possible meteorite strike warrants funding, but if you look carefully at this conclusion, the author wants funding to determine if there *is* a way to protect the planet, which may or may not involve deterring the meteor. This choice is not nearly as strong as (C), so get rid of it.

You know that Flaw questions deal with gaps or assumptions in an argument. You also know that they're pretty similar to Reasoning questions and that they can exhibit similar "traps" (such as overly wordy or confusing answers). Finally, you can use similar POE techniques on Flaw questions, such as trying to match each word or phrase in the answer choices with something in the argument.

Arguments Technique: Using Process of Elimination with Flaw Questions

One thing you might have noticed that we did when discussing some of the answer choices was again to take each word or phrase from the answer choice and ask, "Does this correspond to anything that actually occurred in the argument?" Most of the time, the answer is no. The answer choices might sound impressive ("the author assumes what he sets out to prove," "the author appeals to authority," and so on), but unless you can go back to the argument and say, "Ah, yes, *this* is where the author gives evidence" or "*this* is where the author makes a prediction," then an answer choice that mentions "examples" or "predictions" will be wrong. This technique is HUGE. It will eliminate two or three answer choices every time.

Therefore, take answer choices on Flaw questions very slowly, and make sure to match each piece of the answer choice to a piece of the argument. Once you come across something in an answer choice that doesn't correspond to anything in the argument, you can get rid of that answer choice. Once it's a little wrong, it's all wrong.

This process will allow you to eliminate two or three answer choices in most cases, but what about the ones that remain? You'll find that some of the answer choices on Flaw questions will be consistent with the argument but won't represent a flaw in the author's reasoning. Once you've eliminated any answer choices on Flaw questions that are not consistent with what actually happened in the argument, then go back to check the rest to see if they represent a logical flaw in the structure of the author's argument.



The Argument

14. Advertisement: Each of the Economic Merit Prize winners from the past 25 years is covered by the Acme retirement plan. Since the winners of the nation's most prestigious award for economists have thus clearly recognized that the Acme plan offers them a financially secure future, it is probably a good plan for anyone with retirement needs similar to theirs.

The advertisement's argumentation is most vulnerable to criticism on which one of the following grounds?

- (A) It ignores the possibility that the majority of Economic Merit Prize winners from previous years used a retirement plan other than the Acme plan. 
- (B) It fails to address adequately the possibility that any of several retirement plans would be good enough for, and offer a financially secure future to, Economic Merit Prize winners. 
- (C) It appeals to the fact that supposed experts have endorsed the argument's main conclusion, rather than appealing to direct evidence for that conclusion. 
- (D) It takes for granted that some winners of the Economic Merit Prize have deliberately selected the Acme retirement plan, rather than having had it chosen for them by their employers. 
- (E) It presumes, without providing justification, that each of the Economic Merit Prize winners has retirement plan needs that are identical to the advertisement's intended audience's retirement plan needs. 

PrepTest 44, Section 4, Question 20

Here's How to Crack It

Step 1: Assess the question Here's the question again.

The advertisement's argumentation is most vulnerable to criticism on which one of the following grounds?

This is a classic Flaw question. You're asked to describe what's wrong with the author's reasoning.

Step 2: Analyze the argument Again, you're reading for the conclusion and the premises, and you should think about the purpose structure and the assumptions the author makes. Here's the argument again.

Advertisement: Each of the Economic Merit Prize winners from the past 25 years is covered by the Acme retirement plan. Since the winners of the nation's most prestigious award for economists have thus clearly recognized that the Acme plan offers them a financially secure future, it is probably a good plan for anyone with retirement needs similar to theirs.

What is the purpose structure of this argument? The author is interpreting the fact that all Economic Merit Prize winners have an Acme retirement plan to mean that they must recognize the plan provides a secure future, and thus the Acme plan is good for anyone with similar retirement needs.

Think about this for a moment. Remember that the conclusion for an argument with an Interpret purpose structure is often unwarranted by the evidence, and that the general assumption is that there is no other way to interpret the data. The author goes from a premise that all the winners *have* a particular retirement plan to the winners *clearly recognize* the benefits of the plan. The author believes that the winners chose the plan for its benefits.

But what if the winners didn't choose the plan? The plan could have been the prize, or could just be a popular plan, or the only plan available. The author doesn't consider this possibility. Let's summarize.

- Author's conclusion: *Acme retirement plan is probably a good plan for anyone with retirement needs similar to those of Economic Merit Prize winners.*
- Author's premises: *The winners are covered by the plan and have recognized that it provides them a secure future.*
- Author's assumption: *The winners chose the plan.*

Step 3: Act Remember to jot a note about what you need the credited response to do. In this case, you need the answer that matches how the winners might not have chosen the retirement plan.

Step 4: Answer using Process of Elimination

☒ A

It ignores the possibility that the majority of Economic Merit Prize winners from previous years used a retirement plan other than the Acme plan.



This doesn't seem to match what you're looking for. The ad concerns people whose needs are similar to winners from the past 25 years, so previous winners are not relevant. Eliminate it.

☒ B

It fails to address adequately the possibility that any of several retirement plans would be good enough for, and offer a financially secure future to, Economic Merit Prize winners.



The issue is whether the plan is good for people whose needs are similar to those of the winners, not what's good for the winners themselves. Eliminate it.

- ☒ C It appeals to the fact that supposed experts have endorsed the argument's main conclusion, rather than appealing to direct evidence for that conclusion.

This one is confusing, so be sure to match it to the parts of the argument. Who would the supposed experts be? The winners? Maybe, but did the winners endorse (approve) the argument's main conclusion (the Acme retirement plan is probably good for anyone with retirement needs similar to those of the winners)? Not in the argument. The winners' supposed choice of plan is used to support the conclusion, so this choice doesn't match and you should get rid of it.

- ☐ D It takes for granted that some winners of the Economic Merit Prize have deliberately selected the Acme retirement plan, rather than having had it chosen for them by their employers.

This looks like a good match. The argument states that the winners recognize the plan's benefits, but it does not provide evidence that the winners had the opportunity to choose this plan for themselves. If the plan was chosen for them by their employers, it might not be the best plan for the winners or for people with needs similar to theirs. Keep this one for now.

- ☒ E It presumes, without providing justification, that each of the Economic Merit Prize winners has retirement plan needs that are identical to the advertisement's intended audience's retirement plan needs.

Watch the language on this one. The conclusion refers to people with similar, not identical, needs. Remember that one word can break an answer choice. That leaves (D) as the credited response.

Summary:

Flaw Questions

The key to cracking Flaw questions is finding what's wrong with the argument before you go to the answer choices. Just remember that these questions are different from Weaken questions, in which new information is brought in to attack the argument, and are different from Reasoning questions, in which finding the key assumption won't be nearly as useful.

Sample Question Phrasings	Act
<i>Which of the following indicates a flaw in the author's reasoning?</i> <i>A criticism of the arguments would most likely emphasize that it...</i> <i>The reasoning in the argument is most vulnerable to criticism on the grounds that the argument...</i> <i>The argument above relies on which of the following questionable techniques?</i>	• Break down the argument into its parts; the flaw is usually related to the assumption. • State in your own words what the problem with the argument is. • With each answer, try to match the actions described in the answer choices with those of the argument itself. Look for the choice that has the same problem you found. • Eliminate the answers that don't match; look for the answer that addresses the assumption.



LESSON 10: PRINCIPLE MATCH QUESTIONS

You're nearing the home stretch. The last two question types we will cover are Principle Match and Parallel-the-Reasoning.

We've already covered questions that ask you to find a Principle that strengthens or justifies the conclusion. Principle Match questions, on the other hand, ask for a generalization or rule that "conforms," or is consistent with the argument's method. The analysis you need to do will be similar to Reasoning questions, but the answers may be broader than you might expect.

While many Principle questions are reasonable, some can get nasty, and it's hard to tell which is which until you're in the middle of them. Therefore, you might consider holding off on Principle Match questions until you've worked most of the other types.

Let's look at how one works.

The Argument

15. Statistics indicating a sudden increase in the incidence of a problem often merely reflect a heightened awareness of the problem or a greater ability to record its occurrence. Hence we should be wary of proposals for radical solutions to problems when those proposals are a reaction to new statistical data.

The argumentation conforms most closely to which one of the following principles?

- (A) A better cognizance of a problem does not warrant the undertaking of a radical solution to the problem. 
- (B) Attempts to stop the occurrence of a problem should be preceded by a determination that the problem actually exists. 
- (C) Proposals for radical solutions to problems should be based on statistical data alone. 
- (D) Statistical data should not be manipulated to make a radical solution to a problem seem more justified than it actually is. 
- (E) Radical solutions to problems can cause other problems and end up doing more harm than good. 

PrepTest 44, Section 4, Question 4

Here's How to Crack It

Step 1: Assess the question First, as always, you have to identify your task. Here it is again.

The argumentation conforms most closely to which one of the following principles?

You are asked to find a principle among the answers with which the argument would be consistent. The choices will be generally worded statements—like a moral to a story that could apply to multiple situations—and what you need to do is pick the one to which the argument “conforms,” or fits. If this reminds you of how you work a Reasoning question, then you’re on the right track.

Step 2: Analyze the argument You need to have a clear understanding of what’s happening in the argument. Not all Principle Match questions will be true arguments. Some are more like stories that simply describe a certain situation. If that is the case, be sure to paraphrase the situation. Since this argument has a conclusion and premise, start by noting them.

- Author’s conclusion: *We should be wary of proposals for radical solutions to problems when those proposals are a reaction to new statistical data.*
- Author’s premises: *Statistics that indicate increased incidence of a problem may actually reflect increased awareness of the problem or increased ability to measure it.*

Step 3: Act Because you’re going to be asked to identify the principle with which the argument would fit best, you should be able to state in basic terms what’s going on. For this example, you might come up with something like “Greater awareness or better measurements alone are not a good reason for radical solutions to problems.”

Step 4: Answer using Process of Elimination As you evaluate the answer choices, match the general descriptions in the answers to the specifics in the argument. Eliminate any that are not consistent with your paraphrase or that don’t match the information presented in the argument.

- (A) A better cognizance of a problem does not warrant the undertaking of a radical solution to the problem. 

This sounds like a pretty close match to what you are looking for; it says that the statistics may reflect greater awareness (cognizance) of a problem rather than an actual increase in its incidence. Thus, taking radical action might not be warranted. Hold on to it.

Assess

Be sure to assess where the general principle will be found. Some principles are in the answer (“the following principle”), but some principles are in the passage (“the principle above”).

Analyze

There is no need to find a conclusion and premises on a Principle Match question!

- ☐ B Attempts to stop the occurrence of a problem should be preceded by a determination that the problem actually exists. 

This does not match the argument. Radical solutions are not necessarily the same as stopping a problem. In addition, the author accepts that problems exist but questions whether their apparent increase in frequency is real. Get rid of it.

- ☐ C Proposals for radical solutions to problems should be based on statistical data alone. 

Be sure to read this one carefully. It says that radical solutions *should* be based on data alone. This goes against your paraphrase and the author's suggestion. Eliminate it.

- ☐ D Statistical data should not be manipulated to make a radical solution to a problem seem more justified than it actually is. 

This statement may seem reasonable, but does it match the argument? While the author might even agree with this statement, the passage made no mention of manipulating data and this doesn't match your paraphrase. Get rid of it.

- ☐ E Radical solutions to problems can cause other problems and end up doing more harm than good. 

Again, this statement may be true, or at least seem reasonable, but it doesn't match the argument or your paraphrase. Eliminate it.

Now you're left with (A), the correct answer. Notice that once you understood that the author was suggesting that statistics alone are not a good reason for radical solutions, you were able to eliminate any answer that didn't match up with your paraphrase.

This question illustrates how there can be a pretty big difference between a Principle Match question that asks you to find a principle that conforms to the reasoning and a Principle Strengthen question that asks you to justify the reasoning. (See page 58 for Principle Strengthen questions.) Of course, the answer on both will go along with the conclusion of the argument. But a principle to which the argument "conforms" must also match the argument's method.

Sometimes, the question will ask you to find an answer choice that would conform to a principle contained in the argument. Your approach should stay the same. In this case, paraphrase the principle and then find the answer choice that matches it best piece by piece.

Try one.

The Argument

16. Etiquette firmly opposes both obscene and malicious talk, but this does not imply that speech needs to be restricted by law. Etiquette does not necessarily even oppose the expression of offensive ideas. Rather, it dictates that there are situations in which the expression of potentially offensive, disturbing, or controversial ideas is inappropriate and that, where appropriate, the expression and discussion of such ideas is to be done in a civil manner.

Which one of the following judgments most closely corresponds to the principles of etiquette stated above?

- (A) Neighbors should not be gruff or unfriendly to one another when they meet on the street. 
- (B) When prosecutors elicit testimony from a cooperative witness, they should do so without intensive questioning. 
- (C) There should be restrictions on speech only if a large majority of the population finds the speech offensive and hateful. 
- (D) The journalists at a news conference should not ask a politician potentially embarrassing questions about a controversial policy issue. 
- (E) The moderator of a panel discussion of a divisive moral issue should not allow participants to engage in name-calling. 

PrepTest 45, Section 4, Question 21

Here's How to Crack It

Step 1: Assess the question First, as always, you have to identify your task. Here it is again.

Which one of the following judgments most closely corresponds to the principles of etiquette stated above?

You are asked to find a situation among the answers that is consistent with the general rule in the argument. This time, the choices will be specific situations and you need to pick the one that fits most accurately and completely with the principle in the argument.

Step 2: Analyze the argument Again, you need to have a clear understanding of what's happening in the argument. This one does not have a clear conclusion and premise, so just start by reading the rule carefully. First, you are told that etiquette opposes obscene and malicious talk, but not the expression of offensive ideas as long as they are discussed when appropriate and in a civil (polite) manner.

Step 3: Act You need to identify the situation in the answers that best matches the argument, so start with a paraphrase of the principle. Here, you might come up with something like this: etiquette allows for polite discussion even if the topics being discussed are offensive or controversial.

Step 4: Answer using Process of Elimination As you evaluate the answer choices, match the specific descriptions in the answers to the general rule in the argument. Eliminate any that are not consistent with your paraphrase or that don't match the principle presented in the argument.

- ☒ A Neighbors should not be gruff or unfriendly to one another when they meet on the street. 

Does this match your paraphrase? There is no mention of discussing offensive or controversial material, so this doesn't match. Get rid of it.

- ☒ B When prosecutors elicit testimony from a cooperative witness, they should do so without intensive questioning. 

This does not match the argument. This addresses being polite, but not politely discussing something controversial. Eliminate it.

- ☒ C There should be restrictions on speech only if a large majority of the population finds the speech offensive and hateful. 

So, the only reason for restricting speech is what the majority finds offensive? The principle is about how to discuss offensive material, not when to restrict it. This one has to go.

- ☒ D The journalists at a news conference should not ask a politician potentially embarrassing questions about a controversial policy issue. 

This almost matches, but it is about being polite and not embarrassing a politician, not about how to discuss controversial topics. Get rid of it.

- (E) The moderator of a panel discussion of a divisive moral issue should not allow participants to engage in name-calling.



This sounds like a pretty close match to what you are looking for; a moderator not allowing name-calling during discussion of a divisive issue lines up with polite discussion of controversial topics. This is your best answer.

This may have felt like it was trickier or involved more work. These can often be time-consuming questions, which is one of the reasons they are best saved for later. Your best approach is to have a solid paraphrase of the principle in the argument and then to match each answer choice to your paraphrase and the argument very carefully.

Arguments Technique: Using Process of Elimination with Principle Match Questions

As we saw from these examples, you are looking for a principle among the answer choices that will match the conditions in the argument, or you might be asked to find an answer choice that would conform to a principle in the argument. Either way, your task stays the same: eliminate any answers that don't match up with your paraphrase.

The important thing to remember: you're looking for an answer choice that matches the decision or action in the principle. The principle will be more general, but will match all the parts in the situation.

Summary:

Principle Match Questions

Refer to the chart below on how to approach Principle Match questions.

Sample Question Phrasings	Act
<i>The reasoning above most closely conforms to which of the following principles?</i> <i>Which of the following examples conforms most closely to the principle given in the argument above?</i>	• Make sure you know in which direction the argument flows. Are you being asked to find a principle that conforms to a situation, or a situation that conforms to a principle? • Once you're sure, look for an answer that most closely matches the general principle underlying the argument.

LESSON 11: PARALLEL-THE-REASONING QUESTIONS

We're finally at the end. And there is a reason we saved Parallel-the-Reasoning questions for last—because you should probably avoid them until you've worked all the other questions you can tackle. These questions are not necessarily more difficult, but they are certainly more time-consuming on average than most other question types. Don't forget that all of the questions are worth one point each; why spend more time for the same reward?

The reason that these take so long is that you have to perform Step 2 (Analyze the argument) for six arguments rather than just one! Each answer choice is another argument. Many arguments attached to Parallel-the-Reasoning questions can be diagrammed in some fashion. Your job is then to find the answer choice that has the same diagram.

There are two major types of Parallel-the-Reasoning questions. One type asks you to simply parallel (match) the reasoning, which means the argument and the credited response are not logically flawed. The other type asks you to parallel the "flaw" or "error," which means the argument and the answer will contain the same reasoning error. Use this to guide your Process of Elimination: eliminate flawed answers on a Parallel-the-Reasoning, and get rid of logically correct answers on a Parallel-the-Flaw.

Let's do a more diagrammable Parallel-the-Flaw first.



Hint:

Save Parallel-the-Reasoning questions for last or skip them altogether.



The Argument

17. Political scientist: All governments worthy of respect allow their citizens to dissent from governmental policies. No government worthy of respect leaves minorities unprotected. Thus any government that protects minorities permits criticism of its policies.

The flawed pattern of reasoning in which one of the following most closely parallels that in the political scientist's argument?

- (A) Politicians are admirable if they put the interests of those they serve above their own interests. So politicians who sometimes ignore the interests of their own constituents in favor of the nation as a whole deserve admiration, for they are putting the interests of those they serve above their own. 
- (B) All jazz musicians are capable of improvising and no jazz musician is incapable of reading music. Therefore all musicians who can read music can improvise. 
- (C) Ecosystems with cool, dry climates are populated by large mammals. Ecosystems populated by large mammals have abundant and varied plant life. Thus ecosystems that do not have cool, dry climates have abundant and varied plant life. 
- (D) Some intellectuals are not socially active, and no intellectual is a professional athlete. Therefore any professional athlete is socially active. 
- (E) First-person narratives reveal the thoughts of the narrator but conceal those of the other characters. Some third-person narratives reveal the motives of every character. Thus books that rely on making all characters' motives apparent should be written in the third person. 

PrepTest 44, Section 4, Question 19

Here's How to Crack It

Step 1: Assess the question Good, you've read the question. Here it is again.

The flawed pattern of reasoning in which one of the following most closely parallels that in the political scientist's argument?

Okay, so it's a Parallel-the-Reasoning argument, and you know that you have to try to diagram the argument, if possible, and match that diagram against the diagrams for each of the answer choices. You also know that the reasoning itself is bad because the question asks for the "flawed" pattern of reasoning.

Careful!

Some Parallel-the-Reasoning questions are not about flawed arguments. Read the question carefully.